

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 FAA-00 SY-05 MCT-01 CAB-02

CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01

IO-13 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 L-03 TRSE-00 USSS-00 /072 W

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R 151005Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6227

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: EAIR NP

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SECURITY

REF: STATE 212490

1. SECURITY PROCEDURES AT KATHMANDU AIRPORT ARE NOT IMPRESSIVE, ALTHOUGH THE SMALL VOLUME OF TRAFFIC AND THE NON-EXISTENCE OF TRAFFIC SOMEWHAT MITIGATE THE SITUATION. DEPARTING PASSENGERS ARE GIVEN A CURSORY SEARCH AFTER WHICH THEY ARE HELD IN AN EXIT LOUNGE TO WHICH ONLY AUTHORIZED AIRPORT PERSONNEL ARE, THEORY, OTHERWISE ALLOWED ACCESS. IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER, ACCESS DOES NOT SEEM VERY TIGHTLY CONTROLLED DUE TO LAX ATTITUDES ON THE PART OF AIRPORT STAFF. HOWEVER, THE WEAKEST ASPCT OF AIRPORT SECURITY IS PERIMETER CONTROL. MOST OF THE AIRPORT GROUNDS ARE DEMARCATED BY A SIMPLE WIRE FENCE. THE GUARD FORCE WHICH MANS THIS PERIMETER EXERTS LITTLE REAL CONTROL, AND PASSAGE ACROSS THE RUNWAY IS STILL OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS AND THEIR CATTLE, BICYCLES, ETC.) AT THE POINT WHERE A RUNWAY EXTENSION CUTS ACROSS WHAT HAD BEEN THE MAIN ROAD TO A NEIGHBORING TOWN. PLANS ARE IN HAND TO SUBSTANTIALLY EXPAND THE AIRPORT PERIMETER AND TO ERECT A MORE EFFECTIVE CHAIN-LINK FENCE, BUT AT THE MOMENT ANYONE DETERMINED TO GET ONTO THE TARMAC FOREITHER PILFERING OR TERRORISM

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PURPOSES WOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY. IN ADDITION,

SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE AIRPORT ARE SPLIT BETWEEN POLICE AND ARMY, WITH NO CLEAR DELINEATION OF JURISDICTION. THE ONLY RELATIVELY COMFORTING ASPECT OF AIRPORT SECURITY HERE IS THAT, BEING SMALL AND "END OF THE LINE" INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, KATHMANDU MAY NOT BE A VERY PROMISING LOCALE FOR LAUNCHING A TERRORIST OPERATION.

2. GON DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION IS QUITE INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBILITY OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR AIRPORT SECURITY AND HAS REQUESTED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CONTENT AND LENGTH OF FAA COURSE, QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED OF TRAINEES, ETC. SUGGEST THAT A SHORT-TERM VISIT BY A SECURITY SPECIALIST WOULD BE THE APPROPRIATE WAY TO BEGIN ANY ASSISTANCE. PLEASE ADVISE. ON QUESTION OF PRIORITY, THERE ARE PROBABLY FEW PLACES IN THE WORLD WHERE OVERALL SECURITY STANDARDS ARE LOWER. A HIJACKING FROM HERE WOULD PROBABLY INVOLVE A FAIR NUMBER OF U.S. CITIZENS, WHO CONSTITUTE A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE TOURIST TRAFFIC.

3. DURING SEPTEMBER 10 CALL ON HOME MINISTER, AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED CONCERN REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SECURITY, CALLED ATTENTION TO INADEQUACY OF SECURITY PRECAUTIONS AT KATHMANDU AIRPORT, AND URGED THAT CON TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO REMEDY SITUATION. AMBASSADOR HAS ALSO MADE SAME OBSERVATIONS WITH OTHER HIGH GON OFFICIALS. MAYTAG

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